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TRACTS ON HEALTH....No. 3.

WHAT IS THIRST?

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TO THOSE WHO ADVOCATE THE CAUSE OF TEMPERANCE IN THE DISUSE OF INTOXICATING DRINKS.

[Published originally in the Graham Journal.]

The writer of this article proposes to call your attention to one important point in connexion with this subject: namely: What is thirst?—Or in other words, what is the cause of a desire in man to drink? This question involves a fundamental principle in the cause in which you are engaged, and it ought to be well understood, and correctly answered in order that the true remedy may be applied to the evil of intemperance. For we may theorize and theorize, year after year, as our predecessors have done, and by great and zealous exertion produce a temporary and limited moral influence which may restrain a part of the community from indulging in some of the more odious forms of intemperance, but this influence will sooner or later lose its power on men's minds, as the excitement subsides by which it was produced.

I will endeavor very briefly to answer the question which I have propounded: or to state what I think is the cause of a desire in man to drink.

Thirst is a sensation so universally experienced that few would consider it required a moment's reflection to describe or define it. But is this notion correct? Far from it. The cause of thirst is so deeply involved in the vital economy of man, that were his dietetic and other voluntary habits strictly in accordance with the physiological laws of his nature, the sensation of thirst would be quite a different thing from what it now is, as experienced by most people in the present state of society, living as men do on a profusion of animal food, prepared and eaten with so many exciting and heating spices and condiments.

In a perfectly healthy body whose habits are in conformity with its physiological or vital laws, thirst is simply an indication that the vital economy requires a

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portion of pure water to dilute its fluids and serve as a menstruum to the more assimilated and animalized portions of the blood, &c. and thus render the fluids of the body of a proper consistency to circulate freely and easily through all the arteries, veins, capillary vessels, &c. throughout the whole system; but especially in the minute capillary vessels where the principal changes take place.

Thus, when by extraordinary exercise, or any other means, the healthy body is thrown into profuse perspiration, and greatly diminishes the serous or watery portion of the blood, thirst will follow as an instinctive indication that a portion of pure water is required to replace that which has been thrown off by perspiration, and to keep up the balance between the real wants and expenditures of the system. When the body is rapidly growing, and in warm weather, when the insensible perspiration is more free, natural and healthy thirst or an instinctive demand for water is more frequent: but except in cases of sudden and profuse perspiration or sweating, truly natural and healthy thirst might probably always be assuaged or prevented, and perhaps in the most natural and salutary manner, by the dietetic use of succulent fruits.

Such is the only natural and healthy thirst that man ever experiences, but in the present state of society, he is very subject to an unhealthy thirst, of very frequent recurrence and vehement character. This thirst is induced by various means, but its immediate cause is irritation and feverish condition more or less extensively pervading the system.

Thus if food of any kind be swallowed too rapidly and imperfectly masticated,—or if food be taken at an improper time,—or in such a quantity as to over-distend and oppress the stomach,—or if the food be of a crude and indigestible nature,—or if it be of a highly exciting and irritating character, or be dressed with salt, pepper and other stimulating and irritating seasonings, the stomach will in all these cases experience an irritation, which will be indicated by the sensation of thirst more or less powerful and vehement, according to the degree of gastric irritation and the sympathetic disturb-

ance of the system. This, however, is a morbid or unhealthy thirst; and, generally speaking, is no true indication that the vital economy really requires drink, or a supply of water:—on the contrary, the system is more frequently injured than benefitted by drinking even pure water when such thirst is experienced: for instead of removing, it frequently increases the difficulty under which the system is laboring. Yet this is the kind of thirst which, in more than ninety-nine cases in a hundred, prompts human beings to drink, or to deluge the stomach with a quantity of water or some artificial beverage far more pernicious, and thus compels the stomach and the other organs associated with it in the general system to absorb and carry off, as best they can, the uncalled for and excessive fluid.

There is another kind of thirst connected with a general fever of the system, which is a true pathological indication of the want of pure cold water; not so much as a mere drink, as a medicine, to cool down the heat, and to displace the morbid serum of the blood. In such cases nature's indications are true to her wants, and should always be freely complied with.

From the view which we have taken of the nature and causes of thirst we perceive that the thirst which is most commonly experienced by human beings, is of a morbid or unhealthy character, and that it is by no means, a true indication of the real wants of the vital economy; yet inasmuch as this morbid thirst appeals to the mental and voluntary powers for indulgence, in the same manner that natural and healthy thirst does, and with far more importunity and vehemence, man naturally and in many instances from moral necessity, yields to its demands, by swallowing such beverages as he finds most gratifying to his taste and most alleviating to his thirst. But it is the purely natural and healthy thirst only that indicates the real want of drink, and therefore it is this thirst only which is perfectly satisfied with pure water or the aqueous juices of fruits: while the morbid thirst is always better appeased by some stimulating beverage than by simple water—except in the case of fever, when cold water is instinctively demanded as a medicine. It

is perfectly obvious, therefore, that the thirst which is commonly experienced by human beings, is that which is better satisfied with some stimulating beverage than with pure water; and we have seen that the procuring causes of this thirst are the voluntary dietetic errors of men. These errors, we have also seen, are eating too rapidly and with too little mastication,—taking food at improper times,—taking too much food; and more especially taking food of improper qualities, and prepared in an improper manner; and the use of irritating and deleterious seasonings and condiments. Among these is the use of an undue proportion of animal substances, in the forms of flesh-meat, of hog's lard, &c. together with salt, pepper, mustard and all the other heating and stimulating seasonings, and condiments, and beverages, and especially of the narcotic kind; such as tea, coffee, &c.

All these, in different degrees, serve to irritate the digestive organs and produce morbid or unhealthy thirst, which strongly prompts, and often *compels* man to drink; and urges him most importunately, and sometimes most imperiously to assuage it by the use of stimulating and intoxicating beverages.

If this morbid thirst only led to the drinking of pure water, still the system would be greatly injured by it: for this thirst most generally occurs when the stomach is in a condition in which it cannot be deluged with even water, without being much disturbed and perhaps greatly disordered. By such means the process of digestion is often wholly interrupted or greatly retarded—the organ itself is worried and debilitated, and the chyme is rendered crude and irritating. Besides, it is impossible for the system to be compelled to pump off through the lungs, skin, and other eliminating organs such excessive quantities of water, without being, in a greater or less degree, relaxed and debilitated by the operation:—and when we take into consideration the impurities of the water which is drank by most of the human family, we perceive that the evil is exceedingly augmented. Yet even all this is the mildest form of the difficulty. The thirst which we are contemplating is never satisfied with

pure water. It demands a stimulating beverage, and nothing but the deepest conviction of the great danger of using such beverages and the strongest moral self-control, can deter one who is laboring under such thirst from using such beverages if he can get them. Hence the almost universal intemperance in the use of intoxicating drinks.

The thirst of which I speak is evidently a disease!—as truly so as dyspepsy, gout, rheumatism, &c. and it can be effectually cured only in the same way as they are:—that is, by a total abstinence from those things which are the procuring and exciting causes of it. This certainly must appear to every one most rational in theory, and it has been found entirely true in practice. The writer of this article has fully realized its truth in his own experience: for he has found that the same course of diet and regimen which has relieved him from all the complicated and distressing ailments with which he had been sorely afflicted for years, and restored him to excellent health, has also, at the same time, entirely cured him of this morbid thirst. So that now he has very rarely a desire to take any kind of drink—even pure water. Indeed he has enjoyed the most perfect health of body and mind, and been most entirely free from every symptom of disorder, when he has totally abstained from every kind of drink for months together. And this has not been a self-denying experiment in which he has resisted the calls of nature: for he has abstained from drinking only because he felt no desire to drink: and was fully convinced that it is a bad habit to drink any thing when the vital economy does not naturally and instinctively demand it, or in other words, when there is no natural and healthy thirst. Nor is this the result of the experiment of only a single individual. Many others residing in the city of Boston and elsewhere have tried the same experiment and with the same result. They have all been cured of their morbid thirst.

With these facts and reasonings before us, it appears that the efforts on the part of the "friends of temperance," have come very far short of removing the evil: for they have not struck at the root of the difficulty. As

I have already observed, they may, by the exercise of moral and civil power, restrain for a while, a part of the community from indulging in some of the more odious forms of intemperance; yet so long as the procuring and exciting causes of the morbid thirst of which I have spoken are kept in active existence by improper dietetic habits, it is in vain to hope to remove from man the propensity to drink to excess, some kind of beverage or other, and while this propensity remains, nothing short of physical necessity can long restrain the human family from an excessive use of intoxicating drinks.

But when this morbid thirst is considered and treated as a disease, the remedy is at hand, and the cure is made with as much certainty as that fire will go out for the want of fuel.

Total abstinence, therefore, not only from all alcoholic liquors—from all intoxicating substances, but from all irritating stimulants and from all animal fats and gross animal food, and from excessive flesh-eating, and from gluttony of every kind, and in short, from all dietetic abuses and irregularities, is the only effectual and infallible remedy for this disease: and the only earthly means by which the success of the temperance reformation can be rendered complete and permanent.

This prescription will no doubt be received with horror by every sensualist in the world, and will be answered by the universal declaration that "the remedy is worse than the disease!" And I am not surprised that it should be so regarded by those "whose god is their belly," and who fare sumptuously every day, like the rich man in the parable whose sin was gluttony, and whose punishment was most terrific. For if, as the scriptures declare, the drunkard cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, where shall the glutton appear?—the man who destroys his health and breaks down his constitution by gluttonous excesses, and dies a violent death before he arrives at the age of thirty-five years, or lingers on a miserable victim to his unsanctified appetites, till he is forty-five! Be not deceived! God is not mocked!

What hope can there be of a reformation in the moral character of man unless it be made in obedience to the

laws of God, whether they be physical, organic or moral? How can we expect his blessing on our labors to do good to our fellow men, while we either disregard or trifle with those laws? Have those laws been ascertained, and made the rule of action in the efforts which have been made to carry forward the temperance cause? Have not "the friends of temperance," in their zeal to promote the cause, greatly neglected to make themselves acquainted with those laws, and relied too much on their own wisdom, or rather on their own *feelings*, for direction? If not, then how is it that there is so much inconsistency in their plans of operation, as well as in their precepts and examples? There is my friend J——, with whom I occasionally dine. He began the other day, while his servant was placing "the good things" on the table, to excuse himself for not allowing the decanter of brandy to appear, by saying, "I have become a decided friend to the cause of temperance, and total abstinence from the use of all intoxicating drinks." Well, said I, I am glad to hear of that. I hope you will persevere in the good cause unto the end: and give diligent heed to the light that now shineth in a dark place until its increasing brightness shall have opened into the perfect day. The family soon gathered round the festive board, which was groaning beneath a load of dead carcasses and the various preparations of animal substances, that were sending forth their mingled odor of fat and spices. A scanty variety of vegetables was prepared with comparative carelessness and neglect. In reserve for a second course, was a good supply of puddings and pastry, rich as butter and sugar and eggs and spices could make them—a mince pie well saturated with the best of old Cogniac brandy—and a coffee pot full of "the fragrant beverage from the best of old Java."

A blessing now was invoked by my friend, from the Father of mercies, *on the bountiful provisions of the table!* But can it be supposed that he would have taken the decanter of brandy and placing it upon the table before him, raised his eyes to Heaven and invoked a blessing upon it, before he drank of it? Yet he might have done it with as much propriety as to ask a blessing on

those heterogeneous and deleterious messes and substances actually upon the table before him, and which were equally pernicious to health, and powerfully procuring causes of that loathsome intemperance which he so much abominates in others. But to return :—my friend J——— was all kindness and attention, to supply my wants. "Shall I help you to some of this soup?" Not any; I thank you. "Would you prefer a cut of this roasted pork?" No, I thank you. "Shall I give you some of this boiled turkey? or will you take a piece of that roast beef or steak?" I thank you, not any of them. "But is there nothing upon the table which you can relish? Perhaps you would like a cup of coffee or of tea to excite your appetite?" Alas! my friend I find myself in a sad dilemma! I would not seem to undervalue your kindness, and yet I cannot partake of this food which you have taken so much pains to provide for this occasion, without being guilty of what I consider a culpable violation of the laws of God established in my nature, and thus doing an injury to my whole system. "What do you mean by that?" inquired my friend with astonishment. I simply mean what I have said: I can with certainty enjoy life and health, only by a conformity to those laws of my nature on which life and health depend: and I shall shorten the one and impair the other more by filling my stomach with these provisions of your table, which you have just now offered me, than I should by drinking a moderate quantity of brandy, which you have properly banished from your table, as a poison.

"But what new doctrine is this?" again demanded my friend with increasing astonishment, "which you take it upon you to advance?" It is that I abstain from all ardent spirit,—from all fermented liquors,—from all narcotic beverages and substances,—from all pure stimulants, —from all flesh-meat,—from all gross feeding, and endeavor to be temperate in all things which I allow: because I am satisfied that there is no other way in nature by which man can with certainty prolong life and enjoy health and be free from that morbid thirst which leads to the intemperance in the use of intoxicating drinks that you temperance folks profess to be laboring to remove from society and from the world.

Now my friend, if you would be consistent in advocating the cause of "temperance," you must be as conscientious in regard to what you eat as you are in regard to what you drink: for the stomach is the receptacle in either case; and the general welfare of body and of soul is in both cases equally concerned in the consequences. And therefore, to attach so much importance to the excesses of drinking as to lose sight of the danger of excesses in eating, indicates either great ignorance of the physiological laws of human nature, or a culpable disregard of them. Yet be assured that, until the evil consequences of both eating and drinking to excess—or in other words, until the evil consequences of dietetic errors and irregularities in both meats and drinks, and especially in those things that are deleterious to health, are properly understood and regarded, the "temperance cause" cannot be prevented from reacting upon itself and filling its friends with confusion and mortification.

But my friend, I will not wholly refuse to partake of your bounties. There are, I am glad to perceive, some good and wholesome articles of food upon your table. That bread made of unbolted wheat meal, appears to be excellent. Those potatoes are very fine: and so is that dish of boiled rice, and those apples. If you please, you may help me to a portion of each of these dishes. I can make a delicious dinner from them: and greatly prefer them to the kinds you have offered me, even on the score of gustatory enjoyment.

Thus thousands and thousands, who profess to go heart and hand in this great work of reformation, live, as does my friend J———, adding fuel to the fire in their own bosoms, which they endeavor to quench by drinking freely of cold water or some other fluid, until the whole system is inundated and the vital economy made to struggle with the drenching, relaxing and debilitating flood: and too frequently the waters of this flood are mingled with the fires of perdition which overwhelm and destroy the body and the soul.

There is Mr O. famous for advocating "the cause of temperance." In his public speeches and declamation, he does not fail by his thrilling anecdotes and pas-

sionate appeals, to work up the feelings of his audience to the highest pitch of excitement, when he spreads before them some favorite plan of operation; and they, from the impulse of the moment, give in their names by scores, to carry on the good work. Yet this same Mr O. while sitting upon the stage, waiting for his turn to speak, will grind two or three large cuds of tobacco to atoms, for the sake of the stimulation which he derives from the use of that foul weed, and without which he fears he shall not be able to acquit himself with honor and do justice to his subject: and while he is delivering his speech, he will swallow a tumbler or two of water: and after his public effort is made, he will return home with my friend J——— and spend an hour at his table, filling himself to overflowing: and the next day finds himself greeted in some public newspaper as a champion in the cause of temperance.

If in selecting these two individuals, I have given a fair specimen of the precept and example of many others—may not I truly say most others—then is it not very evident that there is something radically wrong in the principles of "the great temperance movement" of the present day? And is it not necessary that there should be a thorough investigation of first principles; and that the depraved appetites of mankind should be arraigned and tried at the bar of physiological and moral law: and that man should be made to perceive and acknowledge his guilt, and forsake the evil of his ways, before the blessing of God can rest upon and prosper the efforts which "the friends of temperance" are making for the reformation of the world?

We cannot serve God and mammon at the same time; or in other words, we cannot live in daily violation of one class of God's laws and be accepted of him, although we may conscientiously endeavor to obey him in others. Such proceedings are incompatible with the honor of his great harmonious scheme of government: and God, acting upon eternal and immutable principles of truth, constitutionally established in the nature of things, cannot, consistently with the principles thus established, and with the attributes of his own natural character,

prosper our efforts to do good to our fellow men, while we attempt to do it in contravention of the laws of our nature.

There are also other points, of such egregious inconsistencies in the conduct of "the friends of the temperance cause" that they ought to receive the decided disapprobation of every true and sincere friend of temperance and humanity. They that undertake to guide others should themselves walk in the light: for "if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch."

How common is it to see people who set their faces as a flint against the use of alcoholic liquors; and refuse to give employment to those who drink them, and withdraw their patronage from those persons who deal in them; and in their zeal, portray the evils of drunkenness in the most glowing colors, and hale its victims to the bar of civil justice that they may be punished for their inebriations, and when they see a poor laborer drinking a glass of spirit and water, admonish him of his danger of becoming a drunkard, and of the dreadful consequences of that vice, while in their own breath and from the very mouths that utter these admonitions, they send forth that poisonous and filthy odor of tobacco, which betrays the habit of stimulation even more disgusting, and equally destructive to health and life and moral purity. Nay they do not hesitate to indulge in every species of stimulation and sensuality considered *respectable* in a corrupt world, and thus, as a general fact, are in the true sense of the word far more intemperate than the laborer who drinks his spirit and water and receives their pharisaical rebuke.

But a more shocking inconsistency is yet to be contemplated. It is the inconsistency of those who have the reputation of being good men,—members of churches, who require those that are around them to join their temperance societies—to sign a pledge that they will not use any intoxicating liquor—not even wine, nor cider, nor beer, yet after signing this pledge, the very first time they meet the church to celebrate the Lord's supper, the presiding minister pours out in the presence of the Lord and of the church, an intoxicating liquor, pro-

scribed by the temperance pledge, as a poison unfit for human use, and while its deleterious odour is ascending upward from the altar and filling the whole sanctuary, he is invoking the blessing of Heaven upon it and praying that it may be sanctified for the use of the true believer: and having drank of it himself passes it to his brethren of the church for them to drink!

Can any one suppose that the alcohol contained in such liquor, is changed in its nature, or in any degree stript of its poisonous quality by the solemn service of consecration? Or is it proper to drink that in the house of God, which is an abomination to him elsewhere?—to use that as a symbol of the blood of Christ, which is found to be so pernicious in its effects on man as an individual and as a social being, that the most powerful and extensive efforts must be made, and societies formed, and pledges signed in order, if possible, to put a stop to the use of it, in every form and manner, as a drink? Surely here is an inconsistency so palpable—so monstrous, that none but the totally blind can help seeing it.

What need have we all to watch unto prayer and to pray without ceasing—"Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil"—especially that arising from the snares of the table and of the cup! If the great adversary of souls had power over our first parents when they were in innocence and purity, to tempt them through their appetites to violate the laws of God, how much greater is his power over us whose appetites are so deeply depraved: and how much more are we in danger of being led captive at his will, and of falling into deeper condemnation.

If thine eye is unsound thy body is full of darkness: and if the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!—May the light of truth and life penetrate every human breast, and illuminate every soul, and sanctify every heart, and make every human body a pure temple of the Holy Spirit of God; to the praise and glory of God our Father and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,—Amen.